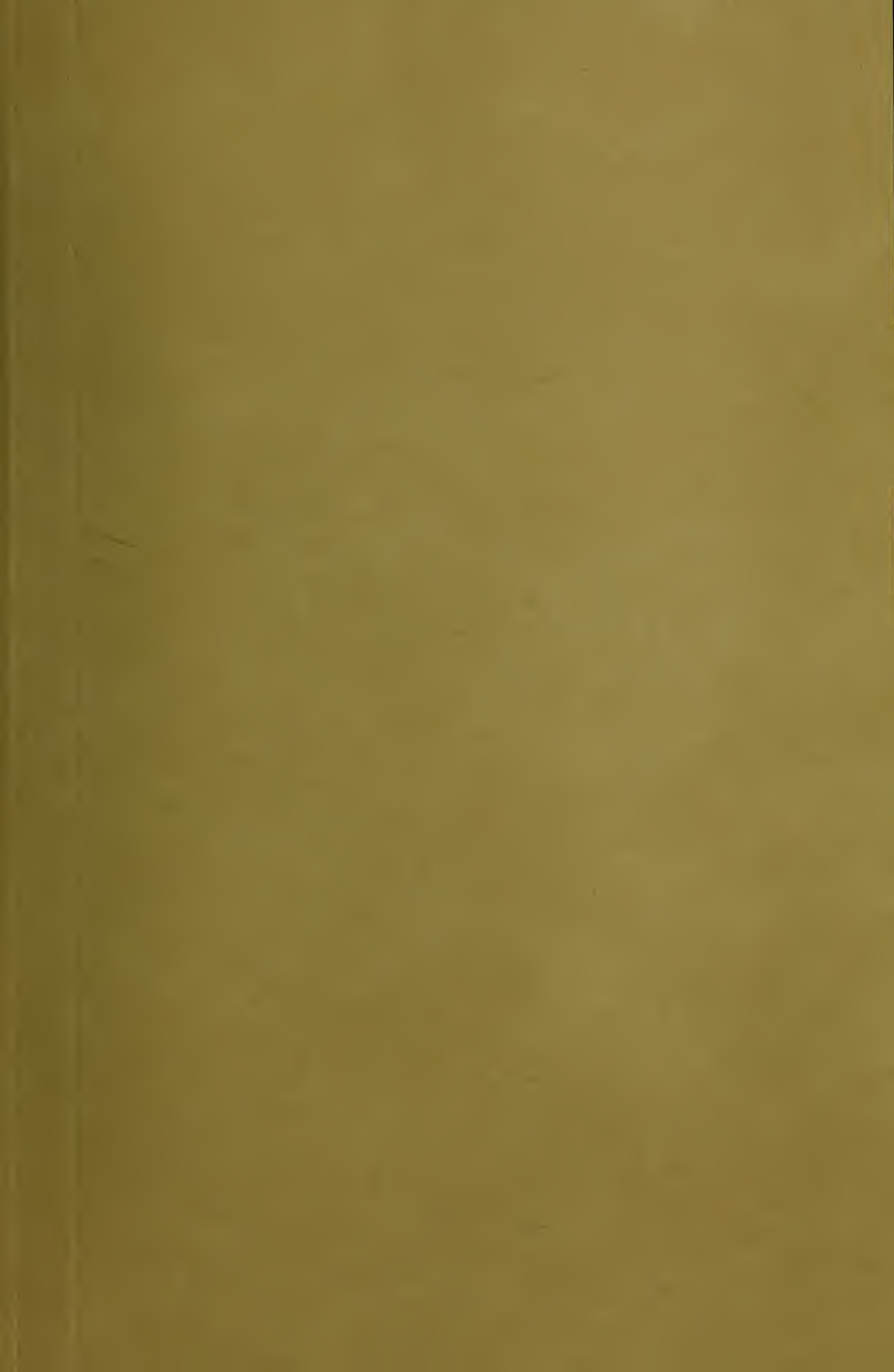




A
CATECHISM
ON THE
CONSTITUTION AND ORDINANCES
OF THE
KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM ORME,

LATE OF CAMBERWELL, LONDON; AND
LATE FOREIGN SECRETARY TO THE LONDON
MISSIONARY SOCIETY;
AUTHOR OF BIBLIOTHECA BIBLICA,
THE LIFE OF DR. OWEN, AND LIFE OF THE
REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith
unto the churches : " *Rev. ii.*

TORONTO:

REPRINTED FROM THE FIFTH ENGLISH EDITION BY
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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

FOURTH EDITION.

THE sale of three large impressions of this small performance has encouraged the Author to revise it with care, and to enlarge it very considerably on some points. He could easily have enlarged it still farther, and thus have rendered it more complete; but this would have defeated his original design, which was to furnish a manual of principles, rather than an elaborate defence of them. He is gratified with finding, from the testimony of many persons in England as well as Scotland, whose judgment he respects, and from the continual demand for the catechism, that his labours have not been altogether fruitless. It is his anxious desire and prayer, that the progress of primitive principles may ever be attended with primitive zeal and devotion. In several parts of this edition, he has quoted the opinions, and referred to the authority, of writers, most of whom were not Independents, to show how candid and learned men have viewed some of the controverted subjects. If any suppose, that they are matters of no moment, and that attention to them is either injurious or unprofitable, he has only to say with Dr. Owen, "Let a gracious soul, in simplicity and sincerity of spirit, give up himself to walk with Christ according to his appointment, and he shall quickly find such a zest and relish in the fellowship of the gospel, in the communion of saints, and of Christ among them, that he shall come up to such riches of assurance in the understanding and acknowledgment of the ways of the Lord, as others by their disputing can never attain unto."—*Owen on the 130th Psalm, 4to edit. p. 163.*

Perth, Sep. 1, 1821.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE

FIFTH EDITION.

"I have always been in the habit of recommending Mr. Orme's Catechism to persons applying to me for church fellowship, and to others who have been seriously inquiring about the subject, as I know no small work that gives such complete information on the point.

ALEXANDER THOMSON,

Minister of George Street Chapel.

Aberdeen, 12th Jan. 1831."

"Orme's Catechism is a clear, succinct, and comprehensive digest of the most important principles of the constitution and ordinances of the kingdom of Christ.

WILLIAM HAWIES COOPER,

Minister of Sion Chapel.

Dublin, 8th Nov. 1830."

"I know of no publication in which the subjects of which this Catechism treats are so satisfactorily explained.

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Dublin, 11th Feb. 1831."

"Orme's Catechism is concise, and its scripture references are well worth being diligently examined, and treasured up in the memory.

C. G. TOWNLEY,

Minister of the Independent Chapel.

Limerick, 4th Dec. 1830."

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CATECHISM

ON THE

KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

SECTION I.

OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

1. *Question.* WHAT is the only pure source of religious knowledge, and the only infallible standard of belief and practice?

Answer. The revelation which God has been pleased to give us in the Holy Scriptures. All other sources of religious knowledge are imperfect, uncertain, and unsatisfactory, on account of the weakness, and corruption of human nature; and all other standards of faith and duty are assumed, imperfect, and destitute of authority.

2. Q. On what grounds are the sacred Scriptures believed to be a revelation from God?

A. Because they assert their divine inspiration, of the truth of which we are furnished with the most satisfactory evidence, both internal and external: 2 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Pet. i. 11; 2 Pet. i. 21; iii. 15, 16.

3. Q. What is the principal design of the word of God?

A. To make men wise unto salvation: 2 Tim. iii. 15.

4. Q. How are the Scriptures fitted to accomplish this design?

A. By the views which they give of the character of God, and of the present state of human nature; the history which they contain of the divine dispensations of mercy and judgment; and the plan which they unfold of redemption through Jesus Christ.

5. Q. How are the Scriptures divided?

A. Into those of the Old and New Testaments, or Covenants.

6. Q. What are the principal subjects of the Scriptures of the Old Testament?

A. The history of the church before the coming of the Messiah; the promises and predictions which supported its faith and hope, relating to his undertaking and kingdom; the institutions which it observed, and the laws by which it was governed.

7. Q. What parts of the Old Testament are Christians bound to observe?

A. All, except those things which are directly, or by implication, abrogated in the New Testament.

8. Q. Are the *constitution* and *ordinances* of the law by Moses, among the things that are abolished?

A. Yes: because that peculiar constitution was designed to answer a local and temporary purpose, and was neither fitted nor intended to be a universal or perpetual dispensation. The ordinances were suited to its nature—carnal,

showy, and typical; and all of them are expressly declared to be now done away: 2 Cor. iii; Gal. iii. and iv; Heb. vii. viii. ix. and x. chapters.

9. Q. What do the Scriptures of the New Testament chiefly contain?

A. A full account of the doctrines, constitution, ordinances, laws, and prospects, of the kingdom of Christ.

SECTION II.

OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLES.

10. Q. To whom did the Lord Jesus commit the power of declaring what were to be the laws of his kingdom?

A. To his servants the apostles, whom he supernaturally qualified for this important work: Matt. xvi. 19. xviii. 18. xix. 28; John, xx. 23.

11. Q. Are all Christians bound implicitly and fully to follow their injunctions?

A. Yes; as seems plain from the extraordinary authority with which they were invested, and the language which they addressed to the people of God: Matt. xxviii. 18—20; John, xx. 21—23. xvii. 18; 1 Thess. iv. 2—8; 2 Thess. iii. 14; 1 Cor. xiv. 36, 37.

12. Q. Are Christians bound to imitate the practices which the apostles sanctioned by their example, as well as those which they taught in their writings?

A. Undoubtedly; unless we suppose that the apostles taught one thing and practised another, which would be subversive of their character; or, that the churches practised what they did not teach. We find also that they taught the same things in every church.

Timothy shall bring you into remembrance of my ways, which be in Christ, as I teach *every where in every church*: 1 Cor. iv. 17. So I ordain in *all churches*, vii. 17.

13. Q. Is there no exception to this?

A. No: except in so far as we can ascertain, from Scripture, that the apostles in any part of their practice were influenced by local or temporary circumstances, and did not teach the same in all cases: for example, Paul's vow, Acts, xviii. 18, and the circumcision of Timothy, Acts, xvi. 1—3; both of which were Jewish practices, and permitted to be observed by Jews for a time; but which, with all other things of a similar kind, are declared, by the apostolical decree, not to be binding on others: Acts, xv. 28, 29.

14. Q. On this principle, are you not bound to have a community of goods, or common stock, which, it is affirmed by some, existed in the church of Jerusalem: Acts, ii. 44, 45.

A. This passage implies no more, than that a high degree of liberality prevailed in the church of Jerusalem; for from Acts, v. 4, it appears, that no individual was required to sell his property, or, if he did sell it, to give more than he was inclined, to supply the wants of the poor; and no such thing as a common stock is ever enjoined upon, or hinted at, as existing in any other church.

From a multitude of reasons, as well as from the express words of St. Peter himself, Acts, v. 4, it is abundantly manifest, that the community which is implied in mutual use, and mutual liberality, is the only thing intended in this passage. *Mosheim's Ch. Hist.* vol. i. p. 64.

15. Q. Is washing the feet of others a practice enjoined on Christians?

A. Never as a church ordinance; but is very proper wherever it is required by a real occasion, as a usual expression of hospitality, or as a suitable indication of Christian humility and affection: John, xiii. 1—17; 1 Tim. v. 10.

16. Q. Is the kiss of charity a divine ordinance?

A. It is undoubtedly the duty of Christians to salute one another in a way expressive of their brotherly love; but salutation by a kiss is referred to in some passages, only as what was usual in the countries where believers then lived: Rom. xvi. 16. The *mode* was never intended to be binding, as salutation is in other places enjoined without any specification of the mode, Col. iv. 15; nor does it appear to have been practised congregationally.

17. Q. Were there not love feasts in some of the primitive churches?

A. The allusion to such a practice is too obscure (Jude, 12) to furnish authority for a public ordinance. And from the language of Paul to the church at Corinth, all feasting in the church seems to be prohibited.

Have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not? 1 Cor. xi. 22.

The cessation of these local, private, or temporary, practices, does not interfere with the general principle, that all Christians are bound to follow the ascertained universal practice of the primitive churches, acting under the regulation and eye of the apostles of Christ.

18. Q. Do not the apostles most solemnly enjoin upon the churches, adherence to all their injunctions?

A. Yes; and even when contemplating the changes that were to be made in them:

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle: 2 Thess. ii. 15.

19. Q. Do they not commend the churches for attention to their instructions on these subjects?

A. Yes:

Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I have delivered them to you: 1 Cor. xi. 2.

20. Q. Do they not express their disapprobation of the smallest changes that were introduced into the churches without their authority?

A. Yes:

If any man seem to be contentious, we have no *such* custom (as women praying with their heads uncovered) *neither the churches of God*: 1 Cor. xi. 16.

21. Q. Do not all these things show, that one general practice prevailed at the beginning, and that we are not at liberty to deviate in any respect from that practice?

A. Yes:

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual; let him acknowledge, that the things which I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant: 1 Cor. xiv. 37, 38.

22. Q. Have the apostles any successors?

A. No. In a table commonly printed along with our bibles, it is said, that "bishops are successors of the apostles, in the government of the church," but this is one of those "notes or comments," which are not only without authority, but absolutely erroneous. The apostles have no successors, or, if they had, bishops have no warrant to assume an office, which from the beginning was altogether distinct from theirs.

23. Q. Is there no power then possessed by the church, of altering or modifying the laws of the kingdom of Christ?

A. There is no hint in Scripture, that a power of this kind is now possessed by any description of men whatever. Where the laws of Christ interfere, no power on earth can dispense with their obligation; where they do not, no human authority has a right to demand obedience.

24. Q. Does not this view of the authority and obligation of apostolical precept and example, afford ground to hope, that the people of God will finally be all of one mind in the things which concern his kingdom?

A. Yes; for as they are all furnished with one rule, all taught by one Spirit, all enjoined to acknowledge only one authority, and as Jesus prayed for this universal *visible* unity, unity must be the final result.

Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even
B

Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth ; for one is your Father, which is in heaven : Matt. xxiii. 8, 9 ; Isa. lii. 8 ; Jer. vi, 16 ; John, xvii. 20, 21 ; Ephes. iv. 4, 6.

SECTION III.

OF THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST, AND ITS CORRUPTION.

25. Q. What general view does the New Testament give of the nature of the kingdom of Christ ?

A. That it is not of this world :

My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews ; but now is my kingdom not from hence : John, xviii. 36.

26. Q. What is implied in its not being of this world ?

A. That it does not resemble in its chief characters the kingdoms or governments of the earth.

1st, Because it is not of worldly origin :

In the days of these kings shall *the God of heaven set up a kingdom*, which shall never be destroyed : and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever : Dan. ii. 44.

2d, Because it does not consist of worldly men :

Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*: John, iii. 5.

3d, Because it is not governed by worldly principles:

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; *but it shall not be so among you*: Matt. xx. 25, 26.

4th, And because it is not supported or promoted by worldly measures:

For the weapons of our warfare *are not carnal*, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, 2 Cor. x. 4: Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice: John, xviii. 37.

27. Q. Did not corruption in its principles, constitution, and worship, begin to operate very early?

A. It began even in the days of the apostles:

The mystery of iniquity is *already* working: 2 Thess. ii. 7. *Even now are there many antichrists*: 1 John, ii. 18.

28. Q. Who were the principal instruments in promoting this corruption?

A. False teachers, who crept into the churches under various pretences; but who were influenced chiefly by covetousness, licentiousness, and ambition:

I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock: Acts, xx. 29.

Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not: 3 John, 9.

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying

the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you; whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not: 2 Peter, ii. 1—3.

29. Q. At what period in the progress of this corruption was an actual alliance formed between the kingdom of Christ and the world?

A. In the beginning of the fourth century when the Emperor Constantine established Christianity as the religion of the Roman empire; bestowed peculiar privileges on its professors, rich benefices on its bishops, and abolished by penal laws, and active persecution, all observance of heathen worship; which procured external and insincere conformity to his views of Christianity.

30. Q. Are this alliance, and its effect on Christianity, predicted in Scripture?

A. Yes:

And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his (*own*) time; For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth (hindereth) will let, until he (*it*) be taken out of the way, and then shall that WICKED (*one*) be revealed: 2 Thess. ii. 1—12.

i. e. So long as the government of the Roman empire remained heathen, it retarded the progress of the man of sin; but as soon as it became nominally Christian, the obstruction to his full manifestation was removed, and his abominations were spread abroad with accelerated rapidity, and with little disguise.

31. Q. Does Christ's kingdom admit of such an alliance or incorporation with earthly kingdoms, or of being regulated by their maxims or laws?

A. No: not without compromising the prerogative of Christ, as sole lawgiver in his church; sacrificing its purity to worldly interests, and prostituting its privileges to ungodly men.

32. Q. These are general reasons; I wish you to state your objections to this alliance more particularly.

1st, I object to it, then, because it is totally destitute of the sanction of Scripture authority: not a single passage of the New Testament, can be brought in its support. It was utterly unknown in the apostolic age, and for three centuries afterwards.

2d, Because the reasonings adduced in its support, from the constitution of the kingdom of Israel, are opposed to the declarations of Jesus and the apostles, respecting the entire abrogation of that peculiar economy; to their express prohibition of returning to its elements; and would, if followed out, lead to consequences which no Christian could defend: Heb. vii. 12. 18, 19; Gal. iv. 9—11.

3d, Because it is referred to in the prophecies of Scripture, only as a corruption, as a commission of fornication with the kings of the earth, and as placing the people of God in a state of captivity and bondage. It is one of the great pillars of that system, which is denominated, a mystery of iniquity, the man of sin, the son of perdition, antichrist, Babylon, the mother of harlots, &c.

See many parts of the book of Revelation, from the 6th to the 21st chapters.

33. Q. Will you explain some of this language? Why is it a corruption?

A. For the reasons assigned in the answer to the 31st question.

34. Q. How do you consider it a commission of fornication?

A. Because it is an unlawful connexion of the church, which is called the Lamb's wife, with a rival to his authority, and in her affections. It is language borrowed from the descriptions in the Old Testament of the idolatrous alliances formed by the people of Israel.

35. Q. How does it place the people of God in a state of captivity and bondage?

A. Because it requires them to acknowledge another authority in Christ's kingdom than his own, and deprives them of some of the rights and privileges which he has conferred; as will be stated afterwards.

36. Q. How is it a main pillar of the system above referred to?

A. Because if the temporal support of the kingdoms of the world were withdrawn, the whole system of antichristian delusion would be reduced to ruin, or become much more harmless than it has ever been.

37. Q. Why is this system called a mystery of iniquity?

A. Because it long wrought in secret, before it was fully manifested; and because by secret measures and deceit, it ever has been, and still is maintained: 2 Thess. ii. 10.

38. Q. Why is it called the man of sin?

A. To denote its entire abomination, and to intimate its progressive advancement and decay; or because the corrupt bishops of Rome have carried the apostacy from primitive christianity to the greatest extent of wickedness.

39. Q. Why is it called the son of perdition?

A. Because it is devoted to destruction: 2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xviii. 8.

40. Q. Why is it called antichrist?

A. On account of its opposition to the will and glory of Christ.

41. Q. Why is it called Babylon the great?

A. Because, like ancient Babylon, by which it was prefigured, it is the oppressor and persecutor of the people of God: Rev. xvii. 6.

42. Q. Why is it called the mother of harlots and abominations?

A. On account of the numerous brood, and the various abominations that spring from it.

43. Q. Will you state your other reasons for objecting to the alliance?

4th, A. I object to it, because it makes a political distinction among men on account of their religious sentiments; because it has been the source of most of the persecutions and intolerance which have been practised under the Christian name; because in its very nature it produces evil, and prevents obedience to many parts of the will of Christ, viz.

1. It destroys the discipline of Christ's kingdom, and violates his law, by rendering it impracticable to separate the precious from the vile; and confounds the distinction between the

church and the world, the holy and profane: Jer. xv. 91; Ezek. xxii. 26.

2. It deprives the people of God of their undoubted right to choose their own pastors and teachers.

3. It sets aside the necessity and the duty of those who are taught, to support those who teach, agreeably to the appointment of Christ; and raises provision for public teachers, by means which the law of Christ utterly disowns: Gal. vi. 6.

4. It often prevents reformation of evil, and retards the progress of truth as no change can be made in a community so incorporated, without the concurrence of the civil power, which is never easily obtained.

5. By the honours and emoluments which it provides, and secures, a great temptation is held out to men destitute of religion, to enter into its ministry; and thus it becomes instrumental in promoting error and hypocrisy.

44. Q. In what state was the kingdom of Christ before it was patronised by the civil powers?

A. It subsisted in the midst of opposition; extended itself in the world, through the blessing of God on its own resources and exertions; and overcame every obstacle, by the faith, patience, and purity of its subjects.

45. Q. What was its state after it became the established religion?

A. It increased in wealth, splendour, superstition, and immorality, till from being persecuted

and oppressed, it became the persecutor and oppressor of others.

46. Q. Did any change take place in the alliance of the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of this world, at the reformation?

A. No; for although the authority of the Pope was abrogated, and various useful and important changes were introduced into all the Protestant states, the civil incorporation of Christianity with them, and the principles which led to it, remained unaltered.

47. Q. How do you account for this?

A. The reformers though great, were imperfect men, and just emerged from gross darkness; so that we may rather wonder at what they came to know, than at how much they were ignorant of. Their opinions on many subjects were unavoidably influenced by their previous circumstances. They were too much occupied in exposing corruptions of doctrines and ordinances, to attend to the main source whence these corruptions flowed; and they were not sufficiently aware, that all true and acceptable religion must be the effect of conviction and free choice produced by divine influence.

48. Q. What is the duty of the people of God, who may be found in connexion with such institutions?

A. To come out of them, and to associate together according to the principles and example of the apostles and primitive Christians.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel (unbeliever); and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?—wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you: 2 Cor. vi. 14—17.

49. Q. How does this passage apply to the subject?

A. By prohibiting in the strongest and most explicit manner, all improper connexions with unbelievers, and all union with them in the observances of a false religion, or by an admission of them to participate with Christians in the ordinances of the New Testament. According to the language of the apostle, all such unions are *unnatural*, inconsistent with fellowship with God, with regard to the souls of others, with consistency in the Christian profession, and with regard to our own safety and comfort. See also 2 Tim. iii. 1—5; Rev. xii. 4, 5.

SECTION IV.

OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

50. Q. Who have a *right* to the privileges of church fellowship?

A. Those only who are regenerated by the

Spirit of God, through the saving belief of the truth:

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven: John, iii. 3; Matt. xviii. 3; 1 Cor. iii. 12—17.

51. Q. Ought any to be admitted into a Christian church, but those who are judged, on proper evidence, to be of this description?

A. No: 1st, because in the above passages and others, the Saviour expressly limits the privileges of his kingdom to such.

2nd, Such only can enjoy its blessings and its privileges, or perform its duties, which are all of a spiritual nature.

3rd, Only such were received into the primitive churches:

Then they that *gladly received his word* were baptised; and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be (*were*) saved: Acts. ii. 41—47; and Acts, ix. 26—28.

4th, And because the epistles to churches are uniformly addressed to them as consisting of *saints, faithful* and *beloved* brethren:

To all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Rom. i. 7. To the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints: 1 Cor. i. 3, &c.

52. Q. Does this require that we should judge the hearts of men?

A. No: it only requires that we judge of the soundness of their profession by their words, and of its sincerity by their conduct. If they speak

and act as Christians, we are bound to believe that they are Christians: Matt. vii. 16—20; Rom. xiv. 1.

53. Q. Does the parable of the tares, Matt. xiii. 24—30, teach, that the righteous and the wicked ought to be permitted to mingle together in church fellowship?

A. No: the parable does not refer to Christian fellowship at all; as plainly appears from the Saviour's explanation of it, who expressly says, ver. 38, "the field is the *world*;" which indeed in ver. 41, he also denominates "his kingdom," in a different sense, viz. because he is the sovereign proprietor and ruler of this world, as well as of his spiritual kingdom: Matt. xxviii. 18; Psal. xxiv. 1; Dan. iv. 32—35. The leading design of this parable is, to prohibit the infliction of temporal punishments on hypocrites and unbelievers: see ver. 28—30.

54. Q. Do not wicked persons seem to have been in some of the primitive churches: Rom. xvi. 17, 18; 1 Cor. v. 1, 2; 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21?

A. Yes: false brethren crept into them unawares; and some of the people of Christ themselves fell into grievous sins, as may happen again in any such society. But the churches were most solemnly enjoined by the apostles to bring such persons to repentance, or to put them away: 1 Cor. v. 2. 13; Gal. v. 9—12; see also the epistles to the seven churches of Asia, Rev. ii. and iii.

55. Q. Ought a society to be acknowledged as a Christian church, which tolerates in its fel-

lowship those who do not appear to believe the gospel, or who live impenitent in known sin, although it professes this to be wrong?

A. No: because the first principle of Christian fellowship is thereby destroyed; and in such a society it must be impracticable to obey some of the plain laws of Christ: 1 Cor. xv. 33, 34; 2 Cor. vi. 14—16; Eph. v. 11.

56. Q. What are the means which Christ has appointed for gathering in his people?

A. The preaching of the gospel, and the circulation of the Scriptures: Rom. x. 14, 15; xvi. 25, 26.

57. Q. Who have a right to preach the gospel?

A. Every man who knows and believes it, and is suitably qualified for making it known; which must be judged of by others, and not merely by himself, except in extraordinary circumstances: Acts, viii. 4. xi. 19—21; 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.

58. Q. Is a Christian church bound to use all the means in its power, to spread the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ around it, and in all the world?

A. Yes: by united and persevering exertions for the good of fellow creatures; by improving the talents, encouraging the zeal of brethren, and defraying their necessary expenses; and in every other way which Christianity sanctions, and the law of love requires: Phil. i. 27; 1 Thess. i. 7, 8; 3 John, 5. 8.

59. Q. What does Christ require of those who believe the gospel?

A. To observe all things, both in their individual and associated capacity, which he authorised his apostles to teach and enjoin on them: Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

SECTION V.

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH.

60. Q. Is there reason to believe, that the New Testament contains sufficient information respecting that government to which Christ intends his people universally to be subject?

A. Yes; it would seem strange and unaccountable, if the Head of the church should give his people full information on every other thing in his kingdom, and leave the administration of it to the ever-varying opinions of fallible men.

61. Q. Do not all bodies of professing Christians, profess and endeavour to find the foundation and outline at least, of their form of church government in Scripture?

A. Yes; which shows the sense generally entertained of the importance and necessity of its sanction.

62. Q. Had our Lord intended to exhibit a

model for universal imitation, would it not have been more plainly and connectedly revealed?

A. We have no more right to expect this, than that all the doctrines and precepts of Christianity should be digested into systematic order. It has not seemed meet to God, to reveal any part of his will to us in this manner; and it is enough, if, by diligent examination of the word of God, and prayer for divine direction, we are able to ascertain the nature and particulars of that order which Christ has appointed for his churches. What the first churches were and did, is perfectly plain to every mind not influenced by prejudice.

63. Q. What appears to be the scriptural form of church government?

A. What is called the Congregational or Independent.

64. Q. What is meant by Congregational church government?

A. That every Christian congregation, with its office-bearers, is complete within itself, for the observance of divine ordinances, and the exercise of discipline, and is subject to no other authority or tribunal on earth.

65. Q. Why is it called Independency?

A. To distinguish it from Episcopacy, or the government of a bishop over many churches, on the one hand; and from Presbyterianism, or the government of assembled clergymen and other office-bearers, distinct from the people, on the other; and from every form which is dependent on the authority or establishment of civil government.

66. Q. What are the grounds on which it is believed, that this was the primitive, and ought to be the permanent, form of church government?

A. 1st, The word *church*, unless when applied to the whole body of believers in heaven and earth, invariably signifies a *congregation* or assembly meeting in one place; and when more than one congregation is intended, it is always in the plural *churches*; Acts, ii. 47, ix. 31; 1 Cor. i. 1; Gal. i. 2; Rev. i. 11.

The visible church of Christ is a *congregation of faithful men*: Art. 19 of the Church of England.

Wheresoever, then, these former notes (marks) are seen, and of any time continue (be the members ever so few, about two or three), there, without all doubt, is the true church of Christ; not that universal, of which we have before spoken, but particular, such as were in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, and other places, wherein the ministry was planted by Paul, and were of himself named the *churches* of God: *Old Scots Confession of Faith*, (1560.)

In any intermediate sense, between a single congregation, and the whole community of Christians, not one instance can be brought of the application of the word in sacred writ.—The plural number is invariably used when more congregations than one are spoken of, unless the subject be of the whole common wealth of Christ.—It is the constant usage of the term also in the writings of ecclesiastical authors for the two first centuries. *Campbell's Lect. on Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 204.

2nd, In our Lord's rule respecting offences, Matt. xviii. 15—17, every offence which cannot be otherwise removed, is to be told to the church or congregation to which the parties belong, *from the decision of which his law admits of no appeal*:

If he still remains obstinate, his offence is to be told to the church, *or the particular congregation of the faithful* to which he belongs : *Macknight's Harmony*.

67. Q. May not the word church in this passage, signify *the rulers*, or *office-bearers*, or *representatives* of the church ?

I reply to this question, by quoting the words of Dr. Campbell : If any one is not satisfied, that the body to which the offence is to be told, is the *congregation* of which the offender is a member, I would recommend it to him, without the aid of any commentator on either side of the question, but with the help of proper concordances, attentively to search the Scriptures; let him examine every passage in the New Testament, wherein the word we render *church* is to be found ; let him canvass in the writings of the Old Testament, every sentence wherein the correspondent word occurs; and if he find *a single passage, wherein it clearly means either the priesthood or the rulers of the nation, or any thing that can be called a church representative*, let him fairly admit the distinction as scriptural and proper ; otherwise, he cannot admit it in a consistency with any just rule of interpretation : *Dr. Campbell's Lect. Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 376.

3d, The most important parts of Christian discipline, are enjoined as the duty of the whole church; such as,

1. The receiving of members :

Him that is weak in the faith receive *ye*, but not to doubtful disputations : Rom. xiv. 1, compared with i. and 7.

2. Dealing with offenders :

Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, *ye who are spiritual* restore such an one in the spirit of meekness : Gal. vi. 1, compared with ch. i. and 2.

3. Excluding the Impenitent:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when *ye are gathered together*, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus: 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.

4. Restoring those who repent:

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was *inflicted by many*; and, therefore, I beseech you that ye would confirm your love towards him: 2 Cor. ii. 6—8.

4th, Not a single passage of the New Testament enjoins or exemplifies any thing like appeal for the redress of evil, to church courts; or invests meetings of representatives with any authority; or recommends submission to them, or justifies the principle upon which they are constructed—which is obedience to the laws of Christ, by *delagation* or *proxy*.

5th, The New Testament contains no *names* for any other meetings for church management, far less any directions for the regulation of their proceedings. Both in name and practice, they are entirely of human invention.

It was only in the second century that the custom of holding councils commenced in Greece, from whence it soon spread through the other provinces: *Moshcim's Ch. Hist.* vol. i. p. 107.

6th, It is the only form of government suited to the universal nature of Christ's kingdom, as it *must* be acted on in all countries at the first introduction of Christianity into them; and the only one which *can* be acted upon in all countries ages, and circumstances.

7th, It is the only form of church government which admits of *entire liberty of conscience*, both towards those who are within, and those who are without; and which can never be incorporated with a worldly kingdom, but at the expense of its fundamental and essential principles.

Of all Christian sects, this (the Independents) was the first which, during its prosperity, as well as its adversity, always adopted the principle of toleration : *Hume's Hist. of Eng.* vol. 11—14.

8th, That the churches must have been independent in the apostolic age, is evident from their wide dispersion; from the difficulty of frequent intercourse in their circumstances; and from no traces existing in Scripture, of their regular or systematic combination.

9th, According to the testimony of the most impartial church historians, and theological writers, many of whom condemn by it, their own practice, Independency was the constitution of all the primitive societies.

The churches in those early times were entirely independent; none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but every one governed by its own rulers, and its own laws : *Mosheim's Ch. Hist.* vol. i. p. 107.

The different congregations, with their ministers, seemed in a great measure independent of one another. Every thing regarding their own procedure in worship, as well as discipline, was settled among themselves : *Campbell's Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 278.

Every church in the time of Cyprian, (about A. D. 250), was in this sense independent; that is, without the concurrence and authority of any other church, it had a sufficient right and power in itself, to punish and chastise all its of-

fending members: *Lord King's Inquiry into the Constitution and Discipline of the Primitive Church*, p. 138.

Independency, 'tis no question, is agreeable to the primitive times, *before the emperor became Christian*: *Selden's Table Talk*.

In no approved writer, for the space of 200 years after Christ, is there any mention made of any other organical, visibly professing church, but that only which is congregational: *Dr. Owen's Nature of Evangelical Churches*, p. 82.

The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman empire, were united only by the ties of faith and charity. *Independence and equality* formed the basis of their internal constitution. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic; and although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse by letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly. *Towards the end of the 2nd century*, the churches of Greece and Asia adopted the useful institutions of provincial synods: *Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

68. Q. Were there not more congregations than one in Jerusalem, where the disciples were very numerous, while, as united in some common form of government, they were denominated the church?

A. The first answer to quest. 66, admits of no exception; for had there been more than one congregation, they would have been called churches. It appears also from Acts, ii. 44. iv. 31, 32. vi. 2—5. xv. 4—12. xxi. 20—22, that the disciples at Jerusalem were in the habit of *meeting together in one place*. And indeed, from the best authorities, we know that the disciples of Christ formed but one congregation in a city for

a long period after the first promulgation of the gospel.

The greatest bishoprics in the world, even in the 3d century, were no more than one single congregation; which were able to meet all in one place: *Lord King's Inquiry*, ch. ii; See also *Clarkson's Primitive Episcopacy*.

69. Q. Was the meeting at Jerusalem, mentioned in the 15th of the Acts, an assembly of representative office-bearers from various congregations; and intended as a precedent for meetings of ordinary church officers, as courts of review, or for hearing appeals?

A. No; 1st, it was not a meeting of representatives, but of the apostles, and elders, and *church* at Jerusalem, with the persons who had come up from Antioch: v. 4. 12. 22, 23.

2nd, It was a reference from one church to another respecting a *matter of fact*, whether certain members of the church of Jerusalem had given a fair representation of the principles taught in that church (see v. 1, 2—24); and to the apostles at Jerusalem, for the determination of a *point of doctrine* or obligation, which they alone had authority to settle—whether believing Gentiles ought to be circumcised in order to salvation: ver. 2—6.

3d, By the infallible decision of the *apostles alone*, was the matter determined: Peter Speaks of the supporters of the opposite sentiments as "*tempting God*," v. 10; James says, "*My sentence is*," v. 19; and the whole body unite in declaring, "*It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us*," v. 28.

4th, The decision of that assembly was binding not only on the individuals present, or on parties supposed to be represented by them, *but on all Christians in, and to the end of, the world*; as the subject was a matter of common concern, and the decision was given by the inspired servants of Christ: see Acts, xvi. 4, 5.

5th, From a mere uninspired decision of any point, there must always exist a right of dissent; which would not have been admitted in this case.

6th, At this meeting the whole church at Jerusalem was present, was addressed by the apostles, v. 7. 12, 13, agreed with them in the appointment of messengers to the church at Antioch, v. 22, and was honoured by being joined with the apostles and elders in the letter which was written, v. 23.

7th, If this meeting should be considered as a precedent, it would justify *one church with its officers*, to make laws for the *universal and perpetual* obedience to the people of God; and if any church, or assembly, can say with justice, *It seems good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no other than these neccessaray things*, there can be no objection, not only to its requiring obedience, but it must be in a high degree sinful not to submit to its authority.

8th, These views of this meeting are not peculiar to Independents.

The meeting of the church of Jerusalem, mentioned in the 15th of the Acts, is commonly considered as the *first Christian council*. But this notion arises from a manifest abuse of the word *council*. That meeting was only

of one church; and if such a meeting be called a *council*, it will follow, that there were innumerable councils in the primitive times. But every one knows, that a council is an assembly of deputies, or commissioners, sent from several churches associated by certain bonds, in a general body; and, therefore, the supposition above mentioned falls to the ground: *Mosheim's Ch. Hist.* vol. i. p. 107.

70. Q. Have we any thing in the place of such a meeting, to which we can appeal for the settlement of any dispute which may arise?

A. We have, what the first churches had not, the apostolical writings complete, in the room of their personal presence, which are sufficient for adjusting any doctrinal or practical difficulties whatever which can occur; and which alone possess the authority necessary for deciding them.

71. Q. Have councils or meetings of ministers, primary or delegated, for the purpose of deciding controversies or making laws, ever been serviceable to the church of Christ?

A. If we can believe the most impartial accounts which have been given of these assemblies, Christianity would not have been a loser, but a gainer, though the greater part of them had never been convened. They have seldom terminated any dispute, but have been, in general, scenes of cabal, intrigue, and contention; and their decisions are often quoted as authorities, instead of the only standard by which all religious questions ought to be determined.

72. Q. What is the meaning of the word presbytery or eldership in 1 Tim. iv. 14?

A. It seems to signify the united office-bearers

of a particular congregation; such as those of Ephesus, Acts, xx. 17, or the gifted men who were present with the apostle on the occasion of Timothy's ordination.

73. Q. In the exercise of discipline, where the church is the sole judge, may not individuals frequently be treated very improperly?

A. As every individual is liable to err, so is every Christian society. But the temptation to inflict injury on any individual, must be small in a voluntary community of individuals, who are all under the same laws, and subject to the same treatment. If a Christian church err, it should always be ready to receive remonstrances and to make reparation. Besides, under any plan of church management, there must always be an *ultimate* authority from whose decision there can be no appeal. And if facts are allowed to illustrate principles, it does not appear that a Christian church is, to say the least, more disposed to act improperly than meetings of church rulers; although, no doubt, much prejudice has been excited by the errors and faults of the former, and by some professors of religion delighting to expose and to ridicule them.

74. Q. Are not independent churches in great danger of falling into erroneous sentiments, which might be prevented by a more extensive and systematic plan of church government?

A. The best answer to this, perhaps, would be an appeal to facts. Independent churches have existed in Britain for more than 200 years, and fewer departures from the truth or practice of the gospel have taken place in them, than in

others; they are now much more numerous than in any former period; and in no body of the same extent is the gospel so generally and uniformly preached; while the societies in England, whose government was wholly in the hands of church rulers, have almost entirely disappeared, or have become mostly Arians and Socinians. See *Bogue and Bennett's Hist. of Dissenters*.

75. Q. Does Independency destroy that union which ought to subsist among the churches of Christ?

A. By no means; it only destroys the exercise of *human authority* in religion. In every other respect it is favourable to unity; and affords every lawful and scriptural means of promoting it. There are no standing parties in independent churches, like the Arminian and Evangelical of the church of England, or the moderate and wild of the church of Scotland; at the same time, all churches of saints, will confess themselves very sinful and imperfect in unity and in all respects.

SECTION VI.

OF THE PUBLIC ORDINANCES OF THE GOSPEL.

76. Q. What ordinances hath Christ appointed his people to observe, either occasionally or statedly?

A. Baptism; the Lord's day; the Lord's Supper; public instruction, includitg reading the Scriptures, prayer and praise; public contribution, and discipline.

§ 1.—*Baptism.*

77. Q. What is the meaning of the word baptism?

A. The application of water to the subject, whether in the way of sprinkling, pouring, or dipping: Mark, vii. 4. 8; Acts, x. 44—48; Titus, iii. 5, 6; 2 Kings, v. 10—14; Luke, xi. 38; Dan. iv. 33; Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

78. Q. What is Christian baptism?

A. A figure of the washing away of sin, through the revealed love of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; it points out the depravity of human nature, the necessity of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God, to fit for the

kingdom of heaven: Acts, xxii. 16 ; Heb. x. 22 ; 1 Pet. iii. 21 ; John, iii. 5.

79. Q. To whom was baptism administered at the beginning of the gospel ?

A. To believers and their households : Acts, xvi. 15. 32, 33 ; 1 Cor. i. 16.

80. Q. Ought it to be administered to such still ?

A. Yes ; because none of the ordinances of Christ, either in their *matter* or *circumstances*, were intended to be of temporary observance.

81. Q. To which of the ancient institutions does baptism correspond ?

A. To circumcision ; which had the same symbolical meaning ; which was the sign and seal of the same covenant ; which embraced also believers and their seed ; and to which baptism is compared in the New Testament : Deut. x. 16 ; Rom. ii. 28, 29 ; Gen. xvii. 9—14 ; Exod. xii. 48 ; Rom. iv. 11, 12 ; Col. ii. 11—13.

82. Q. You consider, then, the baptism of the children of believers an appointment of God ?

A. Yes : Because,

1st, Believers and their seed belong to the same covenant with Abraham and his offspring, to which circumcision was attached : Gal. iii. 14—17. 26—29 ; Rom. iv. 11—17 ; Acts, ii. 38, 39.

2d, We have no instance in the New Testament of the baptism of the head of a family, without the family being baptised along with him.

3d, We have no instance in the New Testament of the baptism of a descendent of Christian

parents after his conversion, although its history embraces a period of thirty years.

4th, We read of no complaint by Jewish believers, that their children were by Christianity placed in worse circumstances than formerly; which they must have been, if altogether excluded from the covenant of God.

5th, In the last days, when the Jews shall be brought into the Christian church, it appears their children shall be viewed in the same connexion with the promises of God as formerly. And we know that all the privileges of Jews are common to Gentiles.

As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever: Isa. lix. 20, 21. lxi. 8, 9; Jer. xxx. 20. xxxii. 38—40.

6th, The early practice and universal observance of infant baptism, cannot easily be accounted for, but from its apostolic appointment. It is referred to more or less explicitly by Justin Martyr, who wrote about 40 years after the death of the apostles; by Irenæus, about 67; by Tertullian, about 100; by Origen, about 100; by Cyprian, about 150, in whose time a council of 66 bishops met, to consider whether baptism should be delayed till the eighth day; but who do not seem to have had any doubts whether it should be administered at all. The subsequent testimonies are too numerous to be quoted. If the practice was not introduced by the apostles,

it is impossible to point out when it was introduced afterwards: *See Wall's History of Infant Baptism.*

83. Q. Are the children of believers entitled to special attention from the churches of Christ?

A. Yes; it is the duty of the churches to make them the subject of special prayer, of particular instruction, of holy watching, and of faithful admonition and warning; as the nursery out of which their numbers may be supplied and increased: Gen. xvii. 19; Exod. xii. 26, 27. Deut. vi. 6, 7; Eph. vi. 1—4.

84. Q. What is the special duty of the head of a family towards his offspring?

A. It is the duty of every Christian parent to communicate religious instruction; to administer judicious correction; to set a holy example; and to abound in prayer for his children; thus bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. See the passages already quoted in this section, and 2 Tim. i. 5. with iii. 15; Prov. iv. 3, 4; 1 Sam. iii. 13, 14; Prov. xiii. 24. xix. 18; Col. iii. 21; 1 Pet. iii. 7.

85. Q. By what considerations ought parents to be influenced in thus bringing up their children?

A. By regard to the public profession made at baptism; by reverence for the authority of the Lord; by love to their offspring; by concern for the increase of the church of God; and by the responsibility which attaches to their connexion.

§ 2.—*The Lord's day.*

86. Q. What day is set apart under the new dispensation for religious worship?

A. The first day of the week, otherwise called the Lord's day.

87. Q. Did Christ change the rest of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week?

A. It appears so; because after his resurrection he repeatedly appeared to his disciples on that day: and the primitive churches seem universally to have met for public worship on it: John, xx. 19—26; Acts, xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

88. Q. What is the chief design of this appointment?

A. To commemorate the resurrection of Christ, when he entered on his rest, after having finished his work; and to be a day of holy rest to the people of God: Heb. iv. 3—10.

89. Q. Are we bound to devote the whole of this day to religious duties?

A. Yes; because from the beginning, God appropriated the seventh part of our time to himself; and, to distinguish it from our own, it is emphatically called the LORD'S DAY: Gen. ii. 2, 3; Exod. xx. 8—11; Rev. i. 10.

90. Q. How ought this day to be spent?

A. In the exercises of secret and family worship; in attending on the public institutions of

the gospel; in holy gratitude and joy; or in works of necessity and mercy: Isa. lviii. 13, 14; Matt. xii. 1—8. 10—12; Acts, xx. 7.

§ 3.—*The Lord's Supper.*

91. Q. For what purposes did the Lord Jesus institute the ordinance of the supper?

A. He appointed it to preserve the perpetual remembrance of his death, as the only atonement for sin; to *show forth* or *exhibit* this great event to the world; to promote the faith, love, and joy of his people; and to be a manifestation of their union and attachment to *each other*, as well as of their connexion with a common Saviour: Matt. xxvi. 26—30: 1 Cor. x. 16, 17; xi. 23—26.

92. Q. In what state of mind ought it to be observed?

A. In the same state in which every other religious duty ought to be performed:—with faith in the Saviour's sacrifice; sorrow on account of sin; gratitude for the gift of redeeming love; joy in the blessed fruits of salvation; and hope in the second coming of the Lord.

93. Q. Is it to be viewed as an oath, covenant, or solemn vow?

A. It is never spoken of in Scripture in this manner; nor does the New Testament ever inculcate religious vows or oaths of any kind:

Matt. v. 33—37. Every act of worship, however, *implies* self-dedication to God.

94. Q. Can it be properly observed by a mixed assembly of godly and ungodly persons?

A. As this is the chief social institution of a Christian church, it cannot be observed except by a society of persons who give evidence that they are *believers*, and who regularly assemble for this and other parts of worship. Its very nature shows, that it is not an *individual* concern, but a *fellowship* in eating and drinking at a *common* table; a stated *communion* not only with the Lord, but with *one another*. The general language of the apostle, therefore, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17, is particularly applicable to this ordinance; and his special language, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8, shows, that where scriptural discipline is neglected, the Lord's supper, according to Christ's institution, cannot be observed.

95. Q. Was Judas present at its first celebration?

A. It is not probable, from John, xiii. 30, that he was; but if he were, he appeared visibly a disciple though really a hypocrite. His true character was known only to Jesus. Whether, therefore, he was present or absent, it affords no justification of observing this ordinance where visible unbelievers are not excluded.

96. Q. How often ought it to be observed?

A. As often as the other stated institutions of the gospel, *every first day of the week*.

97. Q. What evidence is there for this?

A. 1st, It was the uniform practice of the

churches taught by the apostles: Acts, ii. 42. xx. 7; 1 Cor. xi. 20.

2nd, Under the gospel dispensation we have no high festivals besides the Lord's day, and that is never distinguished, at sometimes and not at other, as "ordinance day, communion Sabbath," &c. On every first day of the week, every stated institution of the gospel ought to be observed.

3rd, We have as much evidence and authority for the weekly observance of the Lord's supper, as we have for the weekly observance of any other church ordinance whatever; or as we have from the New Testament, for the religious observation of the first day of the week itself.

4th, There is the most undoubted evidence, that this was the practice of *all* the Christian churches throughout the world, for at least the first three centuries.

5th, It establishes a beautiful harmony between the death and the resurrection of Jesus; it is a weekly feast of love to his people; an animating and solemn declaration of the gospel to sinners; and much calculated both to preserve and to exhibit the separation of Christians from the world.

98. Q. Had it been the will of Christ that this institution should be observed weekly, would he not have been more precise in fixing the time?

A. This objection will equally apply to every other ordinance as well as to this, the time of observing any of them not being fixed in explicit language. Besides, when our Lord instituted the supper, the religious observance of the first day of the week itself had not been appointed,

and could not, therefore, be mentioned: and when Paul wrote to the Corinthians on this subject, this church was already in the practice of observing it, and required no information respecting the time. The objection is, besides, of no force, if it be admitted, that the first churches did nothing but what the apostles enjoined, and that apostolic practice is equally binding with apostolic precept.

99. Q. Will not this frequency lead to carelessness or diminished solemnity in observing the institution?

A. If it do so, it is through human depravity, which may pervert and abuse any thing. But the frequency of secret prayer, of family worship, and of the return of the first day of the week, never produces indifference in a Christian abiding in the faith. Why should it be supposed, that he will venerate the commemoration of his Lord's resurrection, and undervalue the memorial of his death? or why should the one be considered as more solemn than the other?

100. Q. Does the language of the apostle 1 Cor. xi. 27—34, respecting self-examination, and the danger of partaking unworthily, contain any thing inconsistent with the frequent observance of the Lord's supper?

A. By no means: it is the duty of Christians to examine themselves oftener than once a week; instead of only once or twice a year. And the injunctions of the apostle throughout that passage, refer rather to the *proper* and *improper manner* of observing the institution, than to the state and characters of the partakers. It has no connexion

with the frequency or infrequency of its celebration; ver. 20—22. 33, 34.

§ 4.—*Public Teaching, Reading the Scriptures, Prayer and Praise.*

101. Q. Ought there to be public instruction and admonition every Lord's day in the churches of Christ?

A. Certainly: this was one of the stated institutions of the primitive churches; it is founded on the wants of the people of God; and necessarily results from the appointment of pastors and teachers: Acts, ii. 42; Jer. iii. 15; Eph. iv. 11—16.

102. Q. Who are to teach and exhort in the church?

A. Those who are appointed by the church their pastors or teachers. This limitation is necessary to preserve the order, peace, and edification of the body of Christ; and we have no evidence that any one taught or exhorted in the first churches, but by appointment or permission of his brethren, unless endowed with extraordinary gifts: Rom. xii. 6—8; 1 Cor. xii. 28—30.

103. Q. Is it the duty of church members to exhort one another?

A. Yes: as it is their duty to comfort, warn, and pray for one another: 1 Thess. iv 18. v. 14; James, v. 16.

104. Q. Is promiscuous exhortation an ordinance to be observed on the Lord's day?

A. 1st, No: because it is a duty enjoined on all—women as well as men—those who have no talents for public speaking, as well as those who have. Consequently it cannot be an institution distinct from public teaching: Heb. x. 24, 25; Eph. v. 18, 19.

2nd, Because it is an every-day duty; it cannot, therefore, be a stated church ordinance: Heb. iii. 13.

3rd, Because the distinction between public teaching and exhorting, as if they were different exercises, is entirely a human opinion, without the smallest warrant from the word of God: Luke, iii. 18; Acts, ii. 40; 1 Thess. ii. 2—4.

4th, Because some of the passages adduced in support of this practice, refer entirely to a class of persons in the primitive churches, who have no successors, viz. 1 Cor. xiv.

5th, Because the encouragement of such a practice, besides being attended with much evil, seems a direct violation of the precept of the apostle: James, iii. 1: *Be not many of you teachers.*

The above remarks have no relation to mere private meetings of a church, or to cases of necessity; they refer entirely to the practice of exhortation by private brethren, as if it were a stated public ordinance on the Lord's day, distinct from the public teaching of the church.

105. Q. Ought the reading of the Scriptures to form a stated part of the public service of the Lord's day?

A. Yes: the Old Testament was regularly read in the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath: Luke, iv. 16—20; Acts, xv. 21. It is proper that the reading of the Scriptures should hold an equally conspicuous place in the Christian assemblies; and Paul expressly enjoins the churches to read his epistles: Col. iv. 16; 1 Thess. v. 27.

106. Q. Ought prayer and praise to be regularly attended to in the churches on the first day of the week?

A. Undoubtedly: without them there can be no worship. They are not appointments peculiar to the new dispensation; but are suitable and necessary during every state of the church of God, as natural expressions of dependence and homage.

§ 5.—*Public Contribution.*

107. Q. Is public contribution a positive institution of the kingdom of Christ?

A. Yes: this seems to be what is intended by the term *fellowship*: Acts, ii. 42; as the same word is used undoubtedly in this sense, and so translated in our English New Testament: Rom. xv. 26; 2 Cor. ix. 13. It is also particularly enjoined on the church of Corinth: 1 Epist. xvi. 1, 2.

108. Q. Why is it called *the fellowship*?

A. Because there is a special giving on the one part, and a receiving on the other, by which the comfort, love, and communion of the body

of Christ are promoted: 2 Cor. viii. ix; Heb. xiii. 16.

109. Q. To what purposes are the contributions made on the first day of the week to be applied?

A. To all the purposes for which money may be necessary in the churches of Christ; the relief of the poor, the support of the instituted service of the gospel, &c.

110. Q. Why are the references in the epistles to public contribution, more generally connected with the relief of the poor, than with the support of those who labour in the gospel?

A. Because the support of those who minister in the gospel is not matter of *bounty*, but of debt: and their right to it rests not only on their connexion with a church, but on the broad ground of preaching the gospel to men at large: Luke, x. 4—8; 1 Cor. ix. 1—14.

§ 6.—*Discipline.*

111. Q. What do you include under the term discipline?

A. The receiving of persons into the church, and the treatment of offences.

112. Q. In what way are persons to be received into the church?

A. No particular mode of receiving into fellowship, appears to be prescribed by the New Testament. It seems only necessary, that the church should be satisfied, that the person applying be a Christian, as far as they can judge,

and that the profession of faith should be public. In general, perhaps, satisfaction will be most effectually obtained by the testimony of the pastor and brethren: Acts, ix. 26—28.

113. Q. Into what classes may offences be distributed?

A. Into two; private and public.

114. Q. What do you mean by a *private* offence?

A. Every injury done to a brother, or any offence against God, known only to one or two individuals.

115. Q. How is a private offence to be treated?

A. Always according to our Lord's directions: Matt. xviii. 15—17.

116. Q. What do you mean by a *public* offence?

A. A transgression committed against the church at large; the imbibing or propagating of erroneous and destructive sentiments; or any act of iniquity known in the world.

117. Q. How are such offences to be treated?

A. If they be of such a nature as to allow us still to hope that the transgressor is a Christian—he is to be restored on profession of repentance before the church, and submission to reproof: Gal. v. 1; 1 Tim. v. 20. But if they are acts of deliberate wickedness, or a departure from the faith and hope of the gospel, such persons are immediately to be excluded: 1 Cor. v. 1. 5. 13; 2 Tim. iii. 1—5.

118. Q. What are the great objects to be kept in view in all acts of discipline?

A. The good of the offender and the purity of the church: Matt. xviii. 15; 1 Cor. v. 5—7.

119. Q. Are not great attention, faithfulness, and tenderness, necessary in receiving members and treating offences, to preserve the peace, harmony, and purity of the church, and the glory of God?

A. Yes: 1 Cor. iii. 11—17; Heb. xii. 15—17; Matt. xviii. 7. 9; Rom. xvi. 17, 18; 1 Cor. i. 10; 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21; Rev. ii. 1, 2.

SECTION VII.

OF THE OFFICE-BEARERS OF THE CHURCH.

120. Q. What are the only standing offices in the churches of Christ?

A. The offices of bishop and deacon: Phil. i. 1.

121. Q. How do you prove that there are only these two?

A. Because we have no information respecting the choice, qualifications, or duties of any others, but most minute and precise direction respecting them.

§ 1.—*Of Bishops.*

122. Q. By what names is this class of office-bearers denominated?

A. They are called *bishops* or *overseers*, *pastors* or *shepherds*, *rulers*, *elders*, and *ministers*.

123. Q. Why are they called bishops or overseers?

A. Because they are appointed to watch over the souls, or spiritual welfare of their brethren: Acts, xx. 28; Heb. xiii. 17.

124. Q. What does this oversight require?

A. A personal and intimate acquaintance with the state of the church; a deep interest in the spiritual prosperity of every member; affectionate and faithful warning of danger; the administration of judicious counsel, encouragement and reproof; a strong sense of responsibility, and constant prayer for the blessing and preservation of the great Overseer: Ezek. iii. 17—21. xxxiii. 1—9. xxxiv. 1—10; Col. i. 26. iv. 12.

125. Q. Does it not require on the part of those who are the subjects of this watching, a readiness to communicate their difficulties, trials, and dangers; and a willingness to receive admonition, reproof, and advice?

A. Certainly: as without this, pastoral inspection will be in a great measure inefficient

or impracticable: 1 Thess. v. 12—13; 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16.

126. Q. Why are they called pastors or shepherds?

A. Partly for the same reason that they are called overseers; but chiefly because it is their duty to feed or instruct the church: Ephes. iv. 11; 1 Pet. v. 2.

127. Q. What does feeding the church include?

A. Public and private instruction, suited to the various circumstances in which the body and individuals may be placed; dispensing the other stated public ordinances of the gospel; and going before the flock in a holy and zealous example: Isa. xl. 11; Jer. iii. 15; 1 Tim. iii. 1; 2 Tim. ii. 15.

128. Q. Why are they called rulers, or guides?

A. Because it is their duty to govern or guide the church, in attending to the discipline appointed by Christ: Heb. xiii. 7; 1 Tim. v. 17.

129. Q. What is included in this part of their duty?

A. It is their business to converse with all who apply for Christian fellowship; to preside at all meetings of the church; to bring every matter requiring consideration before it; to point out and expound the law applicable to every case of discipline; and to enforce obedience to it as the will of Christ.

130. Q. So all are not rulers or governors in a congregational church?

A. Certainly not. As the provinces of judge

and jury are perfectly distinct in human courts; so are the duties and privileges of rulers and people in the churches of Christ. In both cases the rule must be according to law, the determination according to evidence submitted to the people. We may as well be told, that judges are of no use where a jury must find the verdict; as be assured, that there is no pastoral rule, because the church is required to form and express its own judgment.

131. Q. But if the pastor err, or act improperly in governing the church, to whom is he to be accountable?

A. To his brethren, if he do them an injury, and they can point out his error; and to the great Head of the church, from whom he holds his office and authority: Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Pet. v. 4; Col. iv. 17.

132. Q. Why are they called elders?

A. On account of age, or of their possessing the qualities which should belong to the aged: 1 Tim. iii. 6. This designation is not employed in the New Testament exclusively to denote those who hold the pastoral office. In many places it refers not to office at all, but to long standing, or maturity in the Christian profession: 1 Pet. v. 1—5; 2 John, 1; 3 John, 1; 1 Tim. v. 1.

133. Q. Are there not elders who rule, besides those who teach, in the churches?

A. No: if there be more pastors than one, they may divide the office, perhaps, so as to suit their convenience or respective qualifications. But the Bible knows nothing of a class of spiritual

office-bearers, who have no pastoral authority, nor any right to dispense the ordinances of the gospel: see quest. 121.

134. Q. Does not the apostle speak of such a description of elders, 1 Tim. v. 17?

A. Not at all: the apostle may refer to a division of labour in the same office; but cannot intend two offices, as all the elders referred to were teachers; the first part of the sentence, including those *specially* noticed in the second; some are supposed to labour in word and doctrine more than others; all are entitled to support, but those who labour abundantly, to double maintenance.

The *especially* is not intended to indicate a different office, but to distinguish from others those who assiduously apply themselves to the most important, as well as the most difficult, parts of their office, public teaching: the distinction intended, is, therefore, not official, but personal; it does not relate to a difference in the powers conferred, but solely to a difference in their application: *Campbell's Eccles. Hist.* lect. vi.

135. Q. Why are they called ministers?

A. Because they are servants of God, and not lords over his people: 2 Cor. xi. 23; Ephes. vi. 21; 1 Pet. v. 3.

136. Q. Are not the qualifications for the work of the ministry, many and important?

A. Yes: as is evident from the description of these qualifications given by the apostle: 1 Tim. iii. 1—7; Tit. i. 6—9.

137. Q. How are persons suitably qualified for this office to be obtained?

A. It is the duty of the churches of Christ, to use all lawful and scriptural means to procure, improve, and qualify men of suitable characters, dispositions, and talents, for this work: Eph. iv. 11, 12; 2 Tim. ii. 2.

138. Q. Who are to be judges of their fitness for the office?

A. The church which is to enjoy the benefit of their labours.

139. Q. How are they to be appointed to their office?

A. By prayer and fasting, and laying on of hands: Acts, xvi. 23; xiii. 3. vi. 6.

140. Q. Ought there to be more than one pastor in a church?

A. This must depend on the number and resources of the church, on the talents and activity of the pastors, and on various other circumstances.

§ 2.—Of Deacons.

141. Q. What is the meaning of the word *deacon*?

A. Same as minister—a servant.

142. Q. What kind of service is he appointed to perform?

A. To take the charge of receiving and distributing the funds of the church, and of all temporal matters: Acts, vi. 2, 3.

143. Q. What are the purposes to which the contributions of a church are to be appropriated?

A. The support of the poor, the table of the

Lord, and the maintenance of those who labour in word and doctrine.

144. Q. What are the qualifications of deacons?

A. These are described in Acts, vi. 1—5; and 1 Tim. iii. 8—13.

145. Q. In what manner are they to be appointed to office?

A. By prayer, and laying on of hands: Acts, vi. 6.

146. Q. Were females ever employed in this office?

A. Yes: in particular places, in which, perhaps, there was little intercourse between the sexes: Rom. xvi. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 11.

147. Q. Ought they to be continued in churches still?

A. If circumstances require them. There were none in the church at Jerusalem, although the office originated there in the complaints of the *widows*: Acts, vi. 1.

SECTION VIII

MISCELLANEOUS DUTIES.

§ 1.—*Of the duties of Church Members and Churches.*

148. Q. What duties do members of a church owe to their pastors?

A. They are bound to esteem them very

highly in love for their work's sake; 1 Thess. vi. 12, 13 : to submit to their instructions and admonitions; Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16 : to minister to their necessities and comfort; Gal. vi. 6: and to follow their faith and conduct, as they follow Christ: Heb. xiii. 7; 1 Tim. iv. 12.

149. Q. What duties do members of a church owe to one another?

A. Every thing which is included in our Lord's new commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you:" John, xiii. 34, 35; and which the apostle calls, "the perfect bond:" Col. iii. 14.

150. Q. How will this principle discover itself towards the poor?

A. By liberality in supplying their wants: Acts, ii. 44, 45, and iv. 34; 2 Cor. viii. ix; 1 John, iii. 17.

151. Q. How will it manifest itself towards the afflicted and persecuted?

A. By administering comfort, and by sympathising with their sufferings: James, i. 27; Heb. xii. 12, 13, x. 32—34; 2 Tim. i. 16, 18.

152. Q. How will it show itself to the erring and disobedient?

A. By imparting instruction, warning, and reproof: 1 Thess. v. 14; 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15; Heb. xii. 15, 17.

153. Q. How will it operate generally towards all.

A. By every exercise of kindness, gentleness, forbearance, long-suffering, fidelity, &c.

&c : 1 Cor. xiii; Phil. iv. 8, 9; Col. iii. 12—14.

154. Q. What do churches holding the same faith owe to one another?

A. They ought to be united by the same principle of love, and, in as far as circumstances admit, ought to express it in the same manner as if they were parts of one church, as indeed they are: 1 Cor. xii. 13—27.

155. Q. Ought they to take an interest in each other's spiritual welfare?

A. Yes: Acts, xi. 22—26; xiv. 21, 27; xv. 3.

156. Q. Should they not take an interest also in each other's temporal circumstances?

A. Yes: Acts, xi. 27—30; 2 Cor. ix. 1; Rom. xv. 26, 27.

157. Q. Are they not bound to unite together for diffusing the knowledge of the gospel?

A. Whatever they cannot accomplish individually, it is proper and lawful for them to unite that they may effect; and, as sending the gospel abroad, and other things of a similar kind, require, both in regard to instruments and means of support, more than any one church can in general furnish, the combination of churches for such purposes becomes an important duty.

158. Q. Ought Christians to show themselves ready to every good work in which they may, without sacrifice of principle, co-operate with fellow-believers, though in some things differently minded, or with others?

A. Yes: it is their duty to countenance and support such institutions as Bible, Missionary,

and Tract Societies, for the propagation of Christianity; and to co-operate with others in every scheme of public benevolence, which has for its object the welfare of mankind: Phil. iii. 16, 17.

§ 2.—*Of Fasting.*

159. Q. Is fasting a duty under the New Testament?

A. Yes: Matt. vi. 16—18; Luke, v. 33—35.

160. Q. In what does it consist?

A. In entire or partial abstinence from food and other enjoyments, and in devotional exercises, for a limited time: Judges, xx. 26; Jonah, iii. 7, 8; Acts, x. 30.

161. Q. What is the design of it?

A. To mortify the flesh, to show our displeasure at sin, to deprecate the divine displeasure, and to implore the divine compassion: Joel, ii. 12—14; Daniel, ix. 3.

162. Q. By whom, and on what occasions, may it be observed?

A. By individuals, families, or churches; on such occasions as seem to require extraordinary abasement, prayer, and divine interposition: Ezra, viii. 21—23; Matt. iv. 1—11; Psalms, xxxv. 13; Luke, ii. 37; 1 Cor. vii. 5; Acts, xiii. 2, 3. xiv. 23; Isaiah, lviii. 3—6.

163. Q. In what manner ought it to be observed?

A. According to our Lords's directions, as privately and unostentatiously as possible: Matt. vi. 16—18.

§ 3.—*Of Family Worship.*

164. Q. Ought the worship of God to be maintained in the families of Christians?

A. Certainly: Joshua, xxiv. 15; Jer. x. 25; Acts, x. 1, 2; Rom. xvi. 5; 2 Samuel, vi. 18. 20.

165. Q. How often ought it to be performed?

A. At least every morning and evening, in all cases where it is practicable: Psalms, lv. 17; Psalms, cxxvii. cxxviii.

166. Q. In what ought it to consist?

A. In prayer, praise, and reading the word of God: Psalms, cxviii. 15; Deut. vi. 6—9; Col. ii. 19.

§ 4.—*Of the Duty of Christians to their Country.*

167. Q. What do Christians owe to their country in general, and to its government in particular?

A. It is the duty of Christians to pray for the peace of their country, and to promote its prosperity by every honourable means; to make supplication for the government; to obey its laws, to honour its rulers, and not to speak evil of them, and to contribute conscientiously their portion of its taxes: Jer. xxix. 7; Rom. x. 1; xiii. 1—7; 1 Tim. ii. 1—4; 1 Pet. ii. 13—17.

168. Q. Does this obedience extend to any thing of a religious nature?

A. No: submission in religious matters to civil authority is inconsistent with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom; with exclusive de-

ference to his authority; and with the language, and conduct both of our Lord and his apostles: Mark, xii. 13—17; Luke, xiii. 31—38; Acts, iv. 18, 19. v. 29.

169. Q. Has every human creature a right to worship God as he judges to be proper, without being liable to temporal restraints, penalties, disabilities or discouragements of any kind whatever, except for evil doing, which no plea of conscience or religion can vindicate?

A. Undoubtedly. This is one of the most valuable and unalienable of human rights. It is both wicked and absurd, for one man to interfere between another person and his Creator; to whom alone in religion he is accountable: Rom. xiv. 4; James, iv. 12.

170. Q. Is this view of religious liberty taught in the word of God?

A. Clearly. In our Lord's grand rule: Matt. vii. 12. In the parable of the wheat and tares: Matt. xiii. 28—30. In the apostle's injunction, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind:" Rom. xiv. 5. In his declaration, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin:" Rom. xiv. 23. And in the strong language of Scripture respecting persecution and persecutors: Matt. v. 10—12; Luke, ix. 51—56; 1 Thess. ii. 14—16; 2 Thess. i. 4—10.

171. Q. What is the duty of Christians when persecuted by the government of their country?

A. When all other peaceable and allowed means of redress fail, their duty is clearly pointed out by our Lord: Matt. x. 23; xxvi. 52.

§ 5.—*Conclusion.*

172. Q. What place ought the order and institutions of Christ's kingdom to hold in our Christian profession?

A. They ought never to be viewed as *ends*; but as means appointed by Christ, to promote certain important ends; and as entitled to our conscientious regard, because they are his appointments.

173. Q. What are some of those ends?

A. The promotion of his people's faith, purity, and comfort; their separation from the world; the advancement of the interests of the gospel in the earth; and the furtherance of his own glory: Rom. xiv. 17—19; 1 Tim. iv. 8; Col. i. 28; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

174. Q. What effects ought scriptural views of the nature and ordinances of the kingdom of Christ, to produce on those individuals and churches who profess and observe them?

A. They ought to be distinguished for their steady and enlightened obedience to every other part of the will of Christ; for their affectionate regard to each other; for their humility, zeal, and happiness; for their forbearance and meekness to other Christians differently minded; and for their united and persevering exertions in the cause of the common Christianity.

THE END.

